

## Dragonshards

# Dwarves of the Mror Holds, Part 2

By Keith Baker



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*It takes an anvil to forge an axe.*

-- Mror proverb

### National Character

The Mror dwarves are a passionate people. They are driven by pride, clan loyalty, and a fierce love of life -- food, drink, battle, and all the myriad experiences the world has to offer. Among strangers, a Mror dwarf often hides his true thoughts and feelings behind a grim mask. But in the company of friends, dwarves embrace life with unparalleled zest.

The Mror dwarves are fierce negotiators, favoring intimidation over subtle diplomacy. Most hold honor in high regard, and the oath of a Mror lord is said to be as unbreakable as adamantite. Nothing is ever reliable in Eberron, however, and while the Mror may on the whole be more honorable than humanity, the word of an Aurum concordian is often worth little more than the wind.

The Mror dwarves have been merchants for centuries, but they have been warriors for millennia. Even when Karrn enforced the peace of Galifar, the dwarves continued to train their children in the art of war. While the Mror Holds were largely isolated from the Last War, the orc raiders of the Jhorash'tar remain a constant threat, and the crags and chasms are home to ogres, trolls, and far worse things. The greatest heroes of the Holds hunt in the depths of Khyber, stalking runehounds, umber hulks, and other aberrations in the shadows below the mountains. Some assume that because the Mror are wealthy, they are soft -- while in fact they are harder than stone and sharper than steel. Gold is a new weapon for the Mror dwarves; they have never forgotten the way of the axe.

While the Mror dwarves are proud of their young nation and the power that they wield, old feuds and rivalries still remain, and the dwarves are extremely competitive. Generally these conflicts are out in the open; two teamsters will race to reach a destination, two merchants will undercut one another; two nobles will back different hawks in a hunt. Members of the Aurum are known for pursuing secret vendettas with darker and deadlier consequences. Some say that the Aurum is a clan in its own right, that its power is greater than any of the families of old. Most of the honorable lords feel that the Aurum represents a corruption of clan virtues. They say that true Mror are iron and gold, but those who serve the Aurum are gold alone -- influential but soft and unreliable.

### Mror Fashion

Humans often see the Mror dwarves as greedy and vain. The truth is more complicated. Most Mror dwarves appreciate fine workmanship in a way that few others can comprehend; the dwarves will literally fall in love with objects. Looking at a beautiful goblet, a dwarf sees the toast he will share with his wife (when he finds her). A Mror dwarf can tell stories about every valuable object he owns, either looking to the past he has shared with his treasure or the future he expects to have.

Beyond this, the Mror see personal appearance as far more than simple vanity. A dwarf's accoutrements reflect his wealth and thus, his power, but they also indicate his appreciation of beauty, his judgment, and his intelligence. A poorly dressed merchant has a hard time in business. If he cannot judge the worth of his own clothes, who will trust his merchandise? As a result, a Mror dwarf may spend more on his clothing, armor, jewelry, and weapons than on his home. The Mror are stoic and content to endure physical discomfort and hardship. Sleeping on stone is preferable to wearing drab clothing.

As a result of this, a troop of Mror soldiers are a colorful sight. Dwarven armor is typically coated with enamel or covered with complex engraving. Weapons are equally striking; in addition to colorful hafts and gilded blades, many are made in unusual designs personalized to the warrior. Jewelry is very important to the Mror and often carries special significance, indicating rank within a clan, military honor, or civic office. A Mror dwarf can recognize the significance of another dwarf's jewelry by making an Intelligence check (DC 5); any character can recognize the relevance of the jewels with a Knowledge (nobility) check (DC 20).

In contrast, Mror architecture is stark and functional. Possessing darkvision, dwarves have little need for windows, though most buildings are lit out of deference to gnome and human immigrants. The Mror dwarves derive pleasure from good company, fine food, strong drink, and physical activity. They rarely bother with soft cushions or similar comforts. A wealthy merchant is more likely to spend his profits on beautiful clothes or finely crafted weapons than on lush carpeting and feather comforters.

## **The Mror Dwarves in Battle**

When Prince Karrn led his forces into the Ironroot Mountains, he found a culture engaged in constant warfare. The dwarves placed more value on weapons and armor than home and hearth, and the Mror villages were pale shadows of the cities of Galifar. This was but one of the factors that led Karrn to call the dwarves "barbarians." While the Mror find joy in battle, they are not raging berserkers. Most Mror soldiers have warrior levels, and there are many fighters among the Mror Holds. Other combat classes are uncommon, though Clan Droranath is noteworthy for having true barbarians.

Most Mror soldiers prefer heavy armor and close combat, and typically focus on Power Attack and its related feats. Mror warriors traditionally name weapons and shields. When a dwarf tells a story about one of his many battles, he will refer to his axe as if it were another warrior standing at his side. Battlecries are an important part of Mror culture. A dwarf may develop his own, or he may adopt the battle call of an honored ancestor. Dwarves wish to be remembered on the battlefield, and their colorful armor and mighty cries reflect this fact.

Elite Mror troops generally follow the path of the fighter. Because honor and military skill are both held in high regard by the dwarves, kensai and knight protectors can also be found in the service of the clan lords. Dwarven defenders guard the vaults of House Kundarak, and there are a few frenzied berserkers in Clan Droranath. The dwarf fighter substitution level presented in *Races of Stone* is appropriate for Mror characters.

While Mror smiths constantly improve their skills, they do not possess the uncanny skills of their ancestors. If you use *Races of Stone*, Mror dwarves do not have the ability to produce dwarfcraft items or dwarven armor, and they cannot create magic forges. Such items might be found as relics of the first age, however, and a DM could choose to introduce a smith who has mastered these ancient techniques and learned to produce improved armor or weaponry.

## **Magic among the Mror Dwarves**

While priests of Kol Korran and Onatar have always had a place in the mountains, prior to Karrn's Conquest there was no tradition of arcane magic among the dwarves of the Ironroot Mountains. It is clear that the dwarves of the first kingdom possessed runesmiths and artificers of considerable skill, but this knowledge was lost when the clans were exiled from the depths. In recent centuries, the Mror dwarves have learned much from working with gnomish immigrants. Some clans are beginning to reclaim the secrets of the first age. Wizards are still uncommon, but a handful of artificers work in the depths, and most holdfasts contain magewright smiths and other simple spellworkers.

## Mror Gnomes

Many outsiders have trouble with the image of dwarf bankers; they see dwarves as warriors, not bean-counters. In fact, the dwarves have little interest in book-keeping. The dwarves have the gold. They take pride in their ability to protect their vaults. They know how to drive a hard bargain. But the paperwork? That's where the gnomes come in.

When Karrn brought order to the Ironroot Mountains, he paved the way for a massive gnomish immigration. The gnomes of Zilargo were inquisitive, diplomatic, and skilled miners in their own right. Karrn initially brought gnomes to the mountains to serve as translators, mediators, and advisors. The dwarves were more comfortable dealing with gnomes than with humans, because clan lords disliked looking up at the invaders. For their part, the gnomes saw a tremendous amount of potential in the mountains, and many of the gnomish families sent envoys east. These immigrants played a major role in shaping the mercantile culture of the emerging nation. Most clans have a close relationship with one or more of the gnomish clans. House Sivis and House Kundarak have very strong ties. Sivis gnomes uncovered the full potential of the Mark of Warding and helped Clan Kundarak find its place among the dragonmark houses, and Sivis notaries and stonesenders play a crucial role in the Kundarak banking guild. Most gnomes in the Mror Holds maintain ties with their families in Zilargo, but a few have broken ties with the homeland and fully embraced Mror culture.

Because the dwarves place great importance on personal appearance, the number of gnome tailors and estheticians in the Mror Holds is growing. Gnome *prestidigitation* experts excel at keeping colors fresh, and wealthy Mror pay good platinum for the latest gnome *glamerweave* designs.

## The Clans

Mror exiled twelve heroes from the deep kingdom and set the line of Kundarak to watch them. The great clans are the direct descendants of these heroes, and the holds bear their names. Each hero was accompanied by a host of loyal followers and servants. As a result, there are dozens of different family lines in the Mror Holds.

The great clans are Mroranon, Doldarun, Droranath, Kolkarun, Kundarak, Laranak, Londurak, Narathun, Noldrun, Soldorak, Soranath, Toldorath, and Tordannon. Kundarak, however, has never been a part of the council of clans, and Clan Noldrun was completely destroyed (see page 193 of the **Eberron Campaign Setting** for more information).

## Questions to Ask

When you play a Mror PC or NPC, consider the following:

- What is distinctive about your appearance? What image are you trying to project?

- Are you pursuing a feud with a member of another clan? What wrong has been done to you? How serious is the conflict?
  - What is the name of your weapon? Do you have a personal battlecry?
  - Mror dwarves often collect a particular type of object: jewels, goblets, daggers, and so on. Do you follow this tradition? What do you collect?
  - If you are from the Mror Holds, there's probably a family business you could settle into. Why have you left the holds?
  - Will you try to keep your word? If so, be very careful about making promises. A known oathbreaker is held in low regard in the Mror Holds.
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## About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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